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SERMON

PREACHED before the
HONOURABLE
House of Commons,

At *St. Margarets Westminster,*

January 30th. 1678.

By *THOMAS SPRAT*, D. D.

Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *M. C.* for *Henry Brome*, at the *Gun*
in *St. Pauls Church-yard*, 1678.

Mercurii 30. Die Jan. 1678.

ORdered, That the Thanks of this House be returned to Dr. Sprat, for his Sermon this day Preached before the House at St. Margarets Westminster: And that he be desired to Print his Sermon: And Sir Edmund Jennings, Sir Charles Wheeler, and Mr. Robert Wright, are to give him the Thanks of this House, and to desire him to Print his Sermon.

Will. Goldesbrough,
Cler. Dom. Com.

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A
S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE
HOUSE of COMMONS,

At *St. Margarets Westminster,*
on *January 30th 1678.*

St. Mat. 5. vers. 10.

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness
sake : for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*



WE are here Assembled to lament
the Death of one of the best
Kings that ever lived, and the
most Pious Martyrs that ever
suffered. We are this Day to
bewail a Crime so detested by
God, and Man, that, unless this Day had been long
since publicly appointed, by the Voice of the
whole Nation, pronounced by you the Represen-
tatives of it, for us, and our Posterity, to bewail
it yearly, in this, and all future Ages; the guilty
Memory of this Day had for ever remained an
indelible Disgrace to the Present Age, and to the
whole *English* Name it self. A 2 When

When we shall recollect the Afflictions, and the Virtues of that Blessed King; and shall remember, that in his Virtues he excelled the most happy Princes; in his Afflictions he equalled the most unfortunate Men: Though it should not incline us to murmur at the Divine Providence, whose Judgments are above our knowledge, and therefore ought not to come under our Censure: Yet certainly, it cannot but make us abhor the terrible Effects of furious Zeal, when it mistakes Providence: It cannot but raise in us the greatest Hatred of Faction on a Pretence of Liberty; and of Ambition, when it counterfeits Religion.

Should it not fill us all with Grief and Amazement, that such a King could suffer as a Tyrant! who was, to His People, the most constant Defender of their ancient Privileges, the greatest Author of New ones? Or as an Enemy to the True Religion! who was in his Life the Great Ornament; in his death the most devout Example of it? Or as unworthy to Govern! who, not only by his Birth, had a Successive Right to the Crown, which he could not forfeit; but also, by his Personal Virtues, might have deserved another Title to it, if his Crown had been Elective, and, as His Murderers impudently pretended, at the disposal of his Subjects.

Whether we consider Him on the Throne, as he
was

was there, too short a space, the Vice-Gerent of Gods Power; or in the Church, as he always imitated, and resembled the Divine Purity: Or should we measure him, as we would any other Man: Should we take His Picture, as He Himself delighted to be drawn, with His Crown and Scepter laid aside, and His Wife, and Children, or Servants by Him: Whether we observe His Royal, and Christian, or His Private and Moral Excellencies; we might find, in all, some Extraordinary Character of Greatness, and of that, which is the only true Greatness, such as was admirably temper'd, and adorn'd with Goodness.

But those other more resplendent parts of His Life, are a Subject fitter for a History than a Sermon. And, no doubt, if there shall be any Virtue, any Praise of Virtue in the Generations to come after us; His Name will live, and be mentioned with Reverence in the Records of Honour: Though not in the large Roll of those Kings, who have been only Happy, Prosperous, and Victorious in this World: Yet amongst the far smaller number, but much more Sacred, more truly Glorious number of those Kings that have been Saints, and Confessors, or Martyrs; and therefore *more than Conquerours.*

I confess, I might, and, give me leave to say it, I intended to have complain'd, that the present

Age had not made that Use of him, which it ought : His Enemies for their Repentance, and Amendment ; nor even His Friends for His Praise and Honour. But blessed be God, I am happily prevented in one part of the Complaint : I have nothing now to wish, but that His Enemies would as well perform their Duty to Him, as, it must be acknowledged, you his Friends have done yours ; by that much desired, long expected, Yesterdays Vote ; in which you have given a Resurrection to His Memory, by designing Magnificent Rites to His Sacred Ashes. So that now for the future, an *English* Man abroad will be able to mention the Name of King *CHARLES the First*, without blushing : and His Heroick Worth will be delivered down to Posterity, as it always deserved to be, not only freed from Calumny, or Obscurity ; but, in all things, most illustrious, in all things to be commended ; in most things to be imitated, in some things scarce imitable, and only to be admired.

In confidence of this, I will leave the rest of His just Panegyrick to the Registers of Civil History : And I will only now employ that short time, your favour shall allow me, in representing to you that one particular Grace ; which, I believe, He had in as high a degree, as our Mortal Condition, of it self, is capable to receive, His Magnanimity in Suffering. And it will best become this Religious Place,

Place, and Office, to recommend to you, from amongst His many other Virtues, that one Virtue of his Divine Patience, which he could learn from no other Principle, but his Religion.

To this purpose, I have chosen to speak on these words of our Blessed Saviour; wherein he proposes Persecution, which, to Nature, seems the greatest Evil, to be the greatest Good: Such as all his Disciples ought, not only to endure well, as a necessary Burthen, but to enjoy as a Blessing.

The Words themselves consist of Three Parts.

First, This New, and Strange, Christian Paradox: That to be persecuted is a Blessing.

Secondly, The only Qualification, that can make it to be so: It must be a Persecution for Righteousness sake.

Thirdly, The Great Reason, why it is a Blessing: Because it is attended with the greatest Reward, The Kingdom of Heaven.

I cannot now stay to insist distinctly on these Particulars, or to handle the Argument in my Text, as a Common place of Divinity. It will neither agree with the present temper of your Minds, or my own, to treat of it in such cold, and general terms. But what I shall say on this great, and

and Primitive Doctrine of Christianity, shall be only so much, as you may apply to the present occasion : That when I come to recount the Kings unparallel'd Sufferings, you His Friends may be something comforted, in beholding the solid, and eternal Foundation of His Suffering so well ; which was no other than the Faith into which we were all Baptized : And that therefore the *Christian Faith*, the Faith of the Church of *England*, may have the credit of that greatness of Mind, it taught the King in His Extremity.

That *To be Persecuted is a Blessing*, was a Doctrine never heard of, till our Saviour here first introduced it. No other Teacher, or Law-giver, ever went, or durst go so contrary to the interests and pleasures of Flesh and Blood. None else would have laid so much weight on Humane Nature : or could have made it so easie : none but He, that was God, as well as Man : He that, as Man, knew what it was to suffer : and, as God, knew how to support those that suffered.

'Tis true, the power of bearing Persecution well, has been always pretended to, by all Sects, and Nations, and Religions of Men. All History is full of such great Examples, amongst those, to whom the Gospel was never revealed. But have not the rest too generally gone, on the wrong, or tottering

tottering Principles, of empty Fame, of doubtful Philosophy, of False, or Imperfect Religions? Certainly seldom any truly great, seldom any steady, and unchangeable Comfort, little lasting relief, most certainly scarce any everlasting was to be found, till the appearance of our Saviour, to make Men, on just grounds, to rejoyce, and triumph in Pains, and Losses, and Miseries.

Mankind, before that, was left defective in this most necessary Virtue, of which we have all a perpetual use. For, my Brethren, there is no Retirement so secure, no Provision so large, no Search so happy, as to find out that place, whither no Cares, nor Misfortunes make their way. The Sweetest, the Fairest, the most Plentiful, Alas! you see, the most commanding condition is oftentimes a greater burthen; at best, is only a less, and a gentler misery, not any real happiness. Of all those that built Houses in the Parable, the most raised them on the Sand: the best, and the wisest, could only found them on the Rock: On which, notwithstanding all their prudence, the Winds did blow, and the Sea did rage about them: All their advantage was not a full quiet; but only that the Storms did beat on them in vain.

And this is that for which we are only beholden to our Saviour *Christ*; of whom, we may justly say, in respect of Mankind, as *Augustus* said of
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himself, and *Rome, Lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit* ; he found our Nature weak, and frail, composed of *Adams* mouldring Earth ; but he made it and left it of the finest, and most durable Marble. He himself came persecuted ; but one of the chief ends of his coming, was to free all that believe on him, and obey his commands ; though not from all persecution, yet from all the Curse of it, nay, to do better, than if he had taken all persecution quite away, to make it a cause of Joy, and Felicity, a Blessing to those that are Persecuted.

And, How feeble ! How deceitful ! How much like a broken Reed, which only pierces, where it should uphold, are all the other Motives, and Principles of Suffering well, in comparison to those, that He has taught !

First, Some Men indeed may strive to endure Afflictions courageously, in a sense of Natural Decence ; by the force of some Natural Passion, or by the single Precepts of Natural Wisdom. But, What is the chief end, that such Men can propose to themselves ? Can it be much more, than the bare expectation of transitory Fame, and Honour in this World ? Or some Temporary Interest, and Contentment here below ? And, What mighty Reliefs, or Rewards are these ? Such Consolations, at best, can only stupifie the Mind under pain ; they are far from turning the Pain into a Blessing.

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Such Recompences are imaginary, contemptible, perishing, whilst the labours Men take for them, are great, and real : Whereas to a Christian Sufferer, the labours are contemptible, compared to the inestimable greatness of the Recompence.

Undoubtedly, nothing in this Life can make Afflictions tolerable, much less a Blessing, but a Belief, that there is another Life ; in comparison to the Joys of which, the Miseries of this Life are of no consideration : Nay, a belief, that we shall partake of the Joys of another Life, if we bear patiently the ordinary, and extraordinary Miseries of this : and that nothing can teach us to do the right way, but Religion ; nothing, but the Right Religion.

For *Secondly*, There is also a strange Force, and Resolution of Mind, that may proceed from False Religions, and from the Principles of Enthusiasm. This kind must be confest far to exceed all Natural Courage in its effects : It may sometimes be hardly distinguishable from the true Patience, that is taught by the true Religion it self.

Yet there are very material Distinctions between them : The chief this in my Text. The one is only for the true Righteousness sake : The other for a counterfeit, Hypocritical Righteousness. And besides, they differ, in that the true Religion, rightly used, teaches Men really to believe,

that to be Persecuted is a Blessing; but never to Persecute. False Religion, and Enthusiasm may make Men pretend to believe, that to be persecuted is a Blessing, but really to believe, that the power of persecuting is a greater Blessing, and to use that power with the greatest Cruelty, when they have got it; as we have felt by many dismal Instances, especially that of this black and guilty Day.

However, it is too true, that mistaken Zeal, and deluding Inspirations, have oftentimes a prodigious Influence on those minds, that are possessed with them; possessed in the worst sense of the word: They can easily make men despise all Dangers, and Terrors: They can fill their Proselytes with heat, and raptures enough to rush violently on Torments, to glory in the false presumption of Martyrdom, to do, as *Empedocles* of old, who cast himself willingly into the fiercest Flames, that he might be thought to go to Heaven. We have seen a blind, Fanatical Zeal enrage forty men, to make War against a mighty Nation, in full Peace, in the midst of its Principal City.

And since the Implacable Enemies of our Church and State have had, and still have such a dreadful offensive Weapon in their keeping, as all Zealous, though Erroneous Religion is: Should, not this, my Brethren, be a serious Admonition to us,

us, who profess our selves Friends to the Church and State, to make provision against them, by the better, more powerful, indeed, invincible defensive Weapons of our Spiritual Warfare, that may be learnt from the true and unfeigned Religion? Since they pretend to fetch their Armour from Heaven against our Cause: Ought not we really to fetch ours from Heaven against theirs? We cannot want all other means of defence; we have Reason, and Justice, and Law, and Loyalty on our side: All those the Enemies of our Church and State must want: But let us beware, lest if they have any Zeal, we none, they have something more forcible than any of the other. Most certainly nothing but Conscience well-informed can be an equal match, for Conscience misguided: Nothing but the power of Godliness; nothing but true Zeal can break the force of false Zeal, and of the very form of Godliness.

Wherefore, from that Fatal Example, how much the Name of Godliness, Hypocritically used, stood our Adversaries in stead; may we be instructed to govern our Minds, and strengthen our Hearts, and reform our Lives, by the Directions and Precepts of the true Holiness; to have our Consciences as much in earnest as theirs, but better informed; not only to hate the Hypocrisie, but to out-do the warmth of their Zeal. And, if the

very Shadow of *Christ* could do such wonderful things: What would not his Hand, his Tongue, his Body, his Life do? If by a sad experience, we have found a feigned, and dissembled Piety, so outrageously strong, and too long irresistible: Should we not thence conclude, what greater Influence, what more durable Authority, the true Piety might have on our Minds, by the efficacy of its own true Promises, Rewards, and Comforts? In which God has pitied the Infirmities of our weak Humanity: Has supplied them all in a gracious proportion to our defects: Has provided the greatest happiness for our immortal, and mortal parts hereafter: Has furnisht us with the best relief for our mortal part here.

But, that Religion should bestow the surest aid, and assistance in persecution, is the more strange: Because at the first view, it seems to make persecution more grievous, by forbidding us many helps, and means of defence, which nature offers to the afflicted. Does not our Saviours Doctrine command us, to have the severest thoughts of our selves? It tames the mind, as well as it requires the body, to be subservient to the mortification of the mind: It lays so much restraint on our intemperate pleasures, that to a carnal man it even seems to render prosperity a sort of persecution. It denies us the use of some kinds of resistance; of
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all manner of revenge : Of all actual revenge, which is the delight of the powerful ; of all revengeful thoughts, which may be esteemed some ease to the weak.

How then can it be, that such a Doctrine should turn all persecution into a blessing ? Yes most certainly : And for the most weighty reasons : Of which the two principal are here mentioned. In this life it makes the suffering delightful, because *it is for righteousness sake* : In the next, it makes it our glory, and crown, because of its just claim to *the Kingdom of Heaven*.

First, I say, it is this Doctrine only that prescribes such rules, and provides such helps, for the right ordering of all our thoughts, words, and actions in this Life ; that if they be exactly followed, will put us into a condition of suffering for nothing but *Righteousness sake*. So much moderation it imposes on our enjoyment of things in our power : So strictly it forbids all irregular desires of things in others power : So much it teaches an inoffensive meekness, and caution of not displeasing God, or injuring Man : That whoever lives accordingly, whatever his Persecution may be, he cannot but be innocent in it : And if he be innocent, the Persecution will be so too ; and will do him no manner of hurt.

To a heart so Conscientiously prepared ; so certain of its Duty, so rightly secured in its Cause, the Afflictions of this World have quite another appearance, than to the rest of the World. They are presently found to be only the tender Trials of a merciful Father ; to be not only his Trials, but Tokens, and Testimonies of his Love, and of our Adoption ; to entitle us to the Priviledges of Gods own People, and Children, to his peculiar Care, to his spiritual Joys, to his Kingdom.

That is the other Contemplation, which compleats the Blessing. And it is only the hope of that Kingdom, which our Lord *Christ* alone has purchased for us, that can be equal to the wants and wishes of our Immortal Souls. That only can refresh the distressed, and ease the heavy laden, and support the living, and rejoyce the dying ; without that expectation, the least mortal Frailties, and Crosses, even Mortality it self, were an intolerable Oppression : But, with it, the cruellest mortal Pains may be made light, and inconsiderable : without that belief, as Christians of all Men, so Men of all Creatures, were most miserable. If there were no prospect of Heaven, even Earth it self were a kind of Hell : So dark, so uncomfortable, so dismally doubtful were the condition of Mankind. But now there is a Heaven, so certain, so unquestionable, so near them, who believe

believe it, and labour for it : To such there shall not only be no Hell ; but even Earth it self, amidst all their Earthly Calamities, becomes a kind of Heaven : So truly great is their present Comfort : so unspeakably great will be their future Felicity.

You now behold the Character, Supports, and Benefits of that Persecution ; which, in the Religion, that all of us have embraced, is reckoned as a Blessing. This infallibly is the Christian Doctrine. I come next to inforce, and illustrate it by a Christian Example. And, I might alledge that of the blessed Author of it, our Saviour himself : But, in him, it may be said, the Godhead did sustain the Humanity. I might urge the Apostles, and Primitive Disciples : But they also were immediately assisted by a miraculous Power, enabling them to do, and to suffer. I might produce a Noble Army of Martyrs, in all Ages of the Christian Church : But it will now be enough, once for all, only to mention the blessed Pattern of that Saint-like King : Whose wonderful Patience, in an Age, wherein Miracles were ceased, did almost seem to revive them : His magnanimous Suffering did evidence, how much Strength, and Lustre, the true Piety may add to the most Princely mind : The Afflictions, that surrounded His Head, did not deface, but beautifie His Life : As the Thorns, His Great Master wore at His Passion, they were

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intended by His Enemies for His Shame, and His Pain, but they were in truth His Crown, His Fourth, more precious Crown.

When I seriously reflect on all the Sufferings of that Excellent Prince; how little He deserved the least of them from any man; how much far otherwise He merited from many the chief Authors of them; and yet by how many sad Circumstances they were still increast; against how many fair hopes they still prevailed; and with what unshaken Constancy He bore them all: I cannot but conclude, that He was separated, and Consecrated, as it were, by Gods special appointment, to fall a glorious Sacrifice; to give a new Example of Christian, Passive Courage, to the decaying Virtue of this Age: and that, as the Bloud of Martyrs is truly said to be the Seed of the Church, so the Bloud of one Martyr'd King, should be the perpetual Seed, both of the Church, and Monarchy of *England*.

He succeeded to His Temporal Crowns, by the Conjunction, and Indisputable Right of many Royal Lines. Yet he was so far from having the usual allowance, that seems due to Rightful, Sovereign Princes: From observing whose very faults too curiously their Subjects ought; and in better times, their honourable Enemies were wont to retire with respect: So far He was from being thus used,
that

that even His Virtues were misinterpreted, and scandalously reviled. His Gentleness was miscalculated defect of Wisdom; His Firmness, Obstinacy; His Regular Devotion, Popery; His Decent Worship, Superstition; His opposing of Schism, hatred of the Power of Godliness. Such was the remarkable aggravation of His unjust Persecutions; that though He had manifestly the Right on His side, yet His Enemies, by their Artifices, had got over most of the good, and plausible words, to be on theirs. Whilst the worst of their Actions were sanctified, and made Popular by the specious Titles of *Liberty*, *Purity*, and *Reformation*: He died for the Laws, as a Malefactor; for the Church, the best Reformed Church, as an Enemy to the Cause of God.

To His People He was ever most Indulgent, still scattering amongst them the Royal Prerogatives, with a Liberality rather becoming the Mildness of the Giver, than due to the Ingratitude of the Receivers. For, in answer to all His most Bountiful Concessions, He still met with evil Surmises, perverse Comments on all His Acts of Grace: And those seconded by Mutinous Petitions, Seditious Clamours, and Assaults, and at last an open Rebellion. What shall we say? Some strange fatality, some unusual unheard of Giddiness had unawares seized on, and, in too great a part, infatuated

the *English* Spirit : To make them grow discontented, and sick of their very Prosperity ; thus rashly to employ the Riches, and Plenty, they reaped from the first happy part of His Reign, to render the latter part of it unhappy.

Nor were the Calamities of His Fate only confined to Himself ; which, no doubt, a Mind of so much innocent tenderness, desired ; but they were Infectious to all about Him. That which, in any other Age, would have been thought a proof of the greatest Humane Abilities, to counsel wisely, and faithfully so Judicious a Prince : And a sign of the greatest Humane Felicity to be beloved by so great and good a Prince : was then a certain Forerunner of Misfortune.

Of His dearest Servants, the First, whom he received from his Father, and Himself long protected from the blind Malice of Envy, was snatch'd from Him by the hand of a base Assassinate. And whilst His generous heart was bleeding for the Loss, many thousands of His Subjects, with secret shews of Satisfaction, nay, with open testimonies of Joy, applauded the horrid Murther of His Friend.

His other best Servant ; a Minister, the most able of that time, both for Counsel and Action ; a Friend, one of the best which ever the Church of God had, since it needed such a Friend : Him He
was

was constrained to give up as a Prey to Popular Tumults, or, which is as bad, to Popular Justice : nay, which was worse, and which ought not to have been mentioned, but that the King Himself often spoke, and writ of it, with such Solemn Remorse; His Royal and guiltless Hand was made an unwilling Instrument of that unrighteous Action.

But, the Justice this Parliament has done to the Earl of *Strafford's* Honour, has vindicated the Name of Parliaments, in this Particular : And the Repentance of that merciful King has paid an honourable Aronement to his Ghost. The Servants Innocence has been abundantly justified by the Masters so passionately accusing His own weakness, for yielding to his Death. It was indeed a weakness, to which the Counsels of His disguised Enemies, or timorous Friends provoked Him. Yet, He could never at last have been drawn to it, had He not been half perswaded, that it was better for one Man to die, than for the whole People to perish. And, How justly may we think His Virtues to have been extraordinary! when His greatest fault, (I make bold to call it His fault, and I believe it was His greatest) had so good, and innocent a Foundation, as the Peace of three Kingdoms. Have we not great reason to suppose, that His Conscience was most strictly warch'd and guarded from

Sin? Could any of His Enemies, notwithstanding all their boasts in this kind, shew us Proof of a Conscience so tender? Which did so affectionately lament, so severely repent of that Offence, as if the whole Guilt of it had been His own: Whereas, at the worst, the Infirmary of it only was His, the Guilt belonged to His Enemies.

His own Family was at once Persecuted in many Quarters of the World. There was scarce a great House in all Christendom, that had contracted Alliance with Him, which Gods Visitation did not seem to search out, and to reach in that Age, An observation, in which His Adversaries were wont much to glory: As if He, and His whole Name had been utterly rejected by Heaven. But, success, and prosperity in this World, is rather a Turkish, than a Christian proof of Gods favour: and adversity the like of his displeasure. Or else we might often since have confuted the very same men with their own Argument.

His only Sister had a long familiarity with unhappiness. Her He could never relieve in His most prosperous days. Nor was Providence rowzed to restore her Family, till about the very year of His Martyrdom.

His own Queen was exposed to all manner of Injuries: Rob'd of the Priviledges due to Her Sex; much more to her high Birth, and Condition:

on: Declared Traytor for doing the duty of a Wife: The Laws of Humane Society violated, to keep His very mind from her: His Letters to her intercepted, published, condemned, as Correspondents with the disaffected.

His Children were driven from his Paternal care, in that Age, which most needed it: Some bred up at home, under the Discipline of His Enemies, of whom, even the tender mercies were cruel: Others wandering abroad, and depending on the uncertain pity of His Neighbours. What one of the Ancients said of *Pompey's* fall, was too true of the Kings: One Country could not contain so great a ruine: The Shipwrack was cast on many Shores: Not indeed to be buried there, as *Pompey* was; but to return again by a wonderful Restitution. Yet that satisfaction the King himself lived not to see: He only felt the severe side, their Separation, and Distresses: The comfortable part, their Restoration, His blessed Spirit has enjoyed in Heaven, since His Death: And by a strange, mysterious effect of the Divine Mercy, his very Death ought to be esteemed the principal cause of their Restoration.

Thus was He unjustly persecuted in one part of His Domestick Relations: There was another also; in whose Ruine He was even yet more nearly concerned: And that was the *Church of England*.
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For, Why may I not call our Church a Member of His Private Family? Seeing he cherished it so familiarly, conversed with it so constantly, provided for it so carefully: It were well if this were all: but I must add, He Died for it so Zealously.

For the Service, and Devotions of this Church, His Affections were so inflamed; His Judgment so confirmed; His Practice in them so Incessant; that in all these He was scarce equalled by any of its own Ministers; I am perswaded, He was outdone by none. We have undeniable instances, that neither His best beloved Recreations; nor one of the most sorrowful Messages He ever received; not His most urgent Business; not His greatest Delights; not His greatest Grief could prevail with Him, ever to omit, or but for a moment to interrupt His daily Solemn Prayers.

From this Church He might justly have expected, and he had his last comforts. But, alas! when he most needed her help, he saw her in the greatest outward Desolation her self: Her chief Prelate, one of the most Innocent, Devout, and Magnificent men of that Age, beheaded in the view of Forty thousand men! and too many of them so inhumane, as to rejoyce at the death of a Bishop; against whom, their chief Objection was, his being a Bishop.

Of this Church, whose Preservation, and Prosperity had been always his chief study, he lived to see the Truth questioned, the Glory vanished, the Buildings falling, the Revenues devoured : and so devoured, that he himself must be compelled, either to confirm the Sacrilege by his Authority, or to make way for it by his blood. Of which two dreadful Extremes he chose the last : And so became our Churches Martyr, as he had been her Saint : A Saint incomparably more holy than all the Enthusiastical Saints of the Sectaries : A Martyr, to be preferred before a whole multitude of Martyrs that swell the Romish Calendar.

Of this Church, in his Imprisonments, the Publick Offices were sometimes denied him : The attendance of his own Chaplains sometimes forbid : Seldom but precariously allowed : Liberty of Conscience refused the King, by the meanest of his Subjects, who claimed it as their own Due, both by Religion, and Nature, and made that the chief Pretence of their Rebellion against him.

His most secret Duties of Piety were often disturbed by the abuse and outrage of common Souldiers : Hardly the Service of one of his Bishops was afforded him in his last Agony. Yet Providence so ordered it, that it was the very Bishop, whom, of all his Clergy, he had most employed in Secular Affairs. Nor could any thing more justify the pious, and Conscientious choice of his Ministers, both in Church, and State, than that the very same

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man, who had managed his Revenue, should be thought fittest to direct his Conscience ; that his best Treasurer should be his last Confessor.

As to the Unnatural War against him, he made himself so naked to avoid it, that, when it was forced on him, he was not in a capacity to maintain his own just Rights in it : He went so far to meet his undutiful Subjects in a Peaceful Compliance ; that he divested himself of most of his own strengths, by which he might have suppressed them. Why then did his Enemies so often tell Heaven in their Prayers, that it was not the Arm of Flesh which brought them Salvation ; When they had in their usurped possession the most considerable Forces, and Estates of their own Complices, or his Friends, his Fleets, his Magazines, his Revenue, and the far stronger part of all the Carnal Means of the Nation on their side. Why did they so often boast, in their way of Vain-glorious Humiliations, that they themselves were only dry bones, that a divine Spirit animated them, and that God was their Confederate ? When it was so far from being a signal Providence, that the King was at last overcome ; that indeed it was rather a wonder he was not sooner : That You, and such as You, and Your Fathers, could so long support his declining Cause, against a power so much more mighty than his, and yours.

But God thought fit to suffer him to be defeated. And, though the Divine Counsels were in this, as they are in many other things, unsearchable : Yet, thus much we may

may safely pronounce, that it was not in Wrath to him, but in Mercy. It was indeed our Wound, and our Calamity, not his. For his Sufferings that followed his Defeat, redounded far more to his own glory, than if he had Triumphed in War, or if his Life had smoothly slid away in Peace. His Reign, if it had continued quiet, must needs have been most happy. That goodness of temper, had it not been opposed, would sure have been admirable, seeing it was so great, when most bitterly offended. His Victory, if he had Conquered, would no doubt have been Mild, and Bloodless : None would have perished by it, but Arm'd, and in the Field. He had too great a heart, to insult over the Miserable. He would certainly have laid no other Chains on the Vanquished, but those of Pardon, and Mercy : Seeing he forgave them, and pitied them, amidst the pride and rudeness of their own Victory.

This is a Truth undoubted. Yet still I must affirm, that it was more for His own Personal Renown, he was overcome. Many others would have shar'd with him, in the Honour of the Conquest. His Armies, His Commanders, and Fortune it self might have claimed some part in those Laurels. But, this was a Praise far greater, much rarer, more Christian, wholly Gods, and His own: that, after His Souldiers routed, His Garisons yielded, His Friends reduced to the last extremity, but Despair : And, Who but such Friends would not then have de-

D 2 spaired ?

spaired? Yet still He kept His own mind unconquered, and made that naked, and alone, to incounter, and Triumph over all the malice of His Enemies.

We are now arrived at that, which, in the Worlds Opinion, was the most unfortunate: But, in a Christian Account, was the most Victorious part of the Kings Life. There is still behind a lamentable Story; to us lamentable, though not to Him. But after so many sad Representations, it is time the Veil be drawn. The deplorable remainder is only fit for such Savages to hear, who could see it without Grief, and cause it without Remorse. Here therefore let us pass it by in silence: Let us strive to overwhelm the Cruel, and Guilty Part of the Kings Martyrdom, which was His Enemies Part; by the contemplation of the Innocent, and Honourable part of it, that was His own.

And this, my Brethren, is such a way of keeping the Thirtieth of *January*, as the Royal Martyr Himself most desired. This way of observing it, is most answerable to the first Design; of dedicating such Days to the memories of departed Saints. For when the Primitive Christians first met on such Solemn Occasions, on the very Days, and oftentimes on the very Places, where some eminent Christian had suffered; they were not wont to spend their time in cursing their Enemies, or repeating the wretched circumstances of their Cruelty; but rather in Praying that God would convert them, in declaring the Pious Works, and admirable Patience of those

those that had suffered; and in giving God the glory of their Exemplary Sufferings.

You have therefore heard enough, how this blessed Martyr was unjustly persecuted: Though I have stopt my Narration on the very brink of the Precipice. Let us now see, how He made those Persecutions a Blessing: How He behaved Himself, in those His last, and severest Conflicts: When the whole World was a Spectator, too calmly a Spectator, of the last part of His Life: Whilst wicked men furiously pursued His Death: Furiously; for it was one time, or other, to be the cause of their own destruction: Whilst good Men Prayed for Him, but could not otherwise help Him: Nay, His Enemies Prayed too, and boldly belied Heaven, in presuming, that His Murther was the return of their Prayers. But Heaven was on His side; God supported Him; the Angels ministred to Him; the Devils tempted Him in vain, His Adversaries too effectually.

And, I beseech you, Where can there be found a Worthier, or more plentiful Subject for our Admiration? Than that so great a King, who had swayed those Scepters, that are the Balance of all *Europe*, should come down from His high Estate, by so many easie, and deliberate Degrees! should put off all the Ornaments of a just Sovereignty, to bear all the Indignities of His own Subjects Tyranny, with so little Reluctancy, with so much Contentment! should prepare Himself still for thicker, and greater Afflictions, by a glorious Disdain,

and yet a Pious Improvement of all the former ! should have a mind so compassionate of others Misfortunes, even of His Enemies Offences ! and yet so Serene amidst his own Dangers ! should have a greater lustre, and Majesty of Countenance, as *Moses* had, and that not when he was performing an Act of Government, and Administ'ring the Law ; but when He was dying, by the unjust Pretence of His having broken His own Laws !

For any man to bear miseries well, has been ever counted so great an honour, that some of the ancient Heathens have too extravagantly thought, it equalled Men to God himself, who is not capable of Misery. That (says one of them) is truly divine, to have the Frailties of a Man, the Security of a God. It is indeed, by all true Philosophy, esteemed to proceed from the greatest strength of Nature ; by all true Christianity, from the highest degree of Grace.

Can any other Virtue, so clearly manifest, of what strong, and firm, and invulnerable a temper the heart is made ? Passive courage is performed within, in the Soul it self : When men are forlorn, oppressed, despised, not so well as only forsaken : when they have no Flatterers, few Comforters, scarce any but Enemies near them.

And therefore this Grace before was generally more found in the poor, low, and obscure part of the World : it was commonly excluded from Princes Courts, by a thousand delights, and by the pompous Dreams of
Humane

Humane Greatness. 'Twas almost enough Patience before in great men, to be only more moderate, and reserved in their Pleasures.

From the greatest, and best of Kings before, men used rather to take Examples how to lead Armies, to command Nations, to distribute Justice, to cherish their good Subjects, to subdue the Rebellious. These were the Arts of Empire. It was from the severe Practices of the Cottage, the Cell, and the Gown, that they usually fetch'd Instructions, and Examples, how to submit to hard Fate, to endure mildly the Rigours of a stronger Power, to condemn the Melancholy, and terrors of a Prison, to pardon, or to bear the affronts of mean Conquerours; and, by such hands to die a violent Death with Decence.

What Praises then can be worthy of that King, who so much excelled the upper, and the lower part of Mankind in their different perfections? Who out-did the Upper in Righteousness and Mercy; the Lower, in Meekness, and Long-suffering? How shall we be able to extol His Goodness; who could so readily lay down His own Life for His Subjects? When it has been often esteemed goodness enough in other Sovereigns, to spare sometimes the lives of some of their Subjects, that have transgressed their Commands! What Title shall we bestow on that Magnanimous Courage, which could endure all the barbarous forms of such a Trial, and Execution; the Insolence of the Ignominious Judges; the
Horror

Horror of the disguised Executioners ; nay, even (pardon the Word, for He pardoned the Thing) the Spittle of His Inhumane Persecutors : Could suffer this, with as much unconcerned easiness, as if it had been only the Pomp and Solemnity of His Coronation ?

To witness all this, I might challenge the Testimony of those very Servants, that were, by His Adversaries, imposed on Him in His Restraints : Of whom, many were converted by His Sufferings, who had been His most bitter Enemies, whilst He flourished. I might alledge His Speeches, His Conferences, His Personal Treaties, His Conversation, His Immortal Writings ; all composed in His greatest distresses ; some near the very sight of the Scaffold. They tell us, that when *Cæsar* swam for his life amidst his Enemies, he had such Presence of mind, as to swim with one hand, and in the other to hold up his own Book, and save it from perishing. But, when the King was incompassed with far greater, inevitable dangers, He not only preserved, but wrote that *Book* ; to which, amongst all the Writings of Princes, I know none equal, but *Cæsar's*, if his : None Superiour, but *Dauids* and *Solomons*.

But, What need we seek farther, for a proof of His Royal Courage, and Christian Patience, than to the very men that conquered Him ? And that not only now, when they have so many Reasons to condemn their own Cruelty towards Him : And, of all Reasons, two most unanswerable ones : I wish they would think so :

His

His own pardoning them, and His Sons confirming His Mercy. But we may even venture to appeal to their Opinions, and Censures of Him, when He was in His lowest, they in their highest, most insulting condition.

His Enemies had Him long amongst them : Long they had all His nearest Concernments open to their discovery : His Chambers, His Cabinets, His very Body, and Heart. The last part of His Life they forced Him to pass in a Camp, or Prison, or Hall, or Scaffold. There were no secret conveyances of a Palace ; no officious silence of Servants ; there all His behaviour was exposed to the view of all, and chiefly to those that mortally hated Him.

And what the least indecency or weakness did they discern ? What the greatest Resolution, and Heroick Spirit did they not see in Him ? Did, at any time, any word, or even murmur of discontent come from Him, for which He ought to have been jealous of His Enemies presence ? Nay, rather might He not, in all, have wished for their most exact, and severe observation ? For what did, or could they observe ? What in all His Discourses, but great Truth oppressed, and yet gloriously Prevailing ? What in all His private Actions, but the most unaffected Modesty, and Devotion ? What in all His Publick, but Unmoveable Constancy, and, the most invincible thing in this World, an humble Conscience well-assured ?

How many various, distracting thoughts, of Hatred and Disdain, of natural Tenderness and Affection (not to speak of Fear or desire of Life) might often then have assaulted a weaker heart, in any one of all the dismal degrees of His Passion ! was it not then enough to discompose and shake a mind less established : Or then when, instead of the most flourishing Court of *Europe*, He saw Himself long abandoned to silent Walls, or Rocks, and Seas, and yet more cruel Guards ? Or then when in His Solitude He cast His thoughts back on His Travels abroad ; where He was the love, and delight of Foreign Courts ; and, on His return home, when the whole Nation seemed, for Joy, to go out beyond its own Shores to meet Him : And, now to find, that the same Nation lay so quiet, and astonished at His approaching Murther ? Or then, when He reflected on the spotless Innocence of His whole Life, and compared it, as He well might, with other Princes His Contemporaries : And yet observed the strange difference that Heaven had made in their Fortunes ? Or then when He found, that after the greatest hopes of Peace, and Accommodation, He was so suddenly, so unexpectedly hurried to destruction, that even many of His Enemies could not keep pace with the rest, in their Cruelty ? Or when He saw, that all the second Attempts of His Loyal Friends had proved as unfortunate as the first ? Or, when He remembered the Innocence, and the Calamities of the absent parts of Himself, and took His
last

last leave of those His Children that were present ? Or, when He beheld the places of His Trial, and Martyrdom ; the one the chief seat of His own Justice, the other of His former Splendour ?

Or when — I can go no farther. For this can scarce be spoken without Tears : And Tears will not become a Death so Triumphant. Let it suffice, that, in all this, He was not without all Natural Affections ; nor can any man, that is, be truly Magnanimous. Two things, indeed, came near His heart : The misfortunes of His Family, and Friends ; and the slavery in which He saw His Subjects were going to be intralled. These only could touch, yet even these could not disorder His Soul, nor weaken His Faith in God ; to whom He meekly resigned His own Private, and the Publick Cause, which was His own too ; and by a Divine Spirit foretold the happy recovery of both.

Let therefore the present Age, and Posterity, let all his Friends and Admirers know, what his Enemies could not but confess ; that in all his last Words, and Looks, and Actions, He not only equalled his former greatness ; but he Did, and Spoke, and Look'd, as became the Glory he was going to possess. He parted from his Crowns, as not ashamed to have worn them, nor conscious of deserving to lose them, nor unwilling to leave them. He submitted not to the unjust Sentence, as a King : He yielded to the cruel Execution of it, as a Christian. The dishonourable part he refused ; the

painful he accepted. He pleaded not for himself at his Enemies Bar, because it was below him : He pleaded, and prayed for his Enemies at the Bar of Heaven, which only was above him. That Majesty which Nature gave him, he preserved, he improved : That Humility, and Charity, which Religion taught him, he practised, he adorned.

What Comforter, in so great a Tempest, could have inspired him with such Security, such Calmness, such Chearfulness ? Who ? But He, whom the Winds and Seas obeyed : He, that walked Himself on the roughest Waves ; suffered himself the greatest Torments, and was able to make His Disciples do the same. Of that Divine Teacher He learnt this Heavenly Truth, *That Persecution is a Blessing* : And, He behaved Himself conformable to that blessed Example, as well as Doctrine. He was Persecuted for Righteousness sake ; whether we take Righteousness for Justice, or Religion ? For both of which He was a Martyr : And, although his Persecutions might seem a Curse to him in this World, because they deprived him of an Earthly Diadem : Yet they were a Real, Inexpressible Blessing to him : For he is abundantly, unmeasurably recompenced in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Whether the Kingdom of Heaven be taken, as usually it is in Scripture Language, for the Gospel of that Kingdom : Those Truths, and Precepts, that shew the way to it : Or for the Joys of Heaven it self, to which they

they lead : He certainly has had the blessings of both : He felt, out of question, the sincere Comforts of the Evangelical Doctrine in this World : His Life shewed it ; his Sufferings proved it ; his Death most evidently confirmed it. And therefore we have a charitable, undoubted assurance, that he attained, at his Death, to the other more happy Sense of the Word : That (as he himself, the very Moment of his Expiring, said he should) *He has exchanged his Corruptible for an Incorruptible Crown :* That the Text of the Sermon Preached before him, at his Coronation, though it then might seem unseasonable, has proved Prophetical : Which was the latter part of those Words, *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.*

We have now attended this God-like Man, to the end of his Labours : And, as much as we can do, by our Imperfect Applauses, and Congratulations, we have brought him to the end of his Faith, his entrance into the Kingdom of Glory. But, I am sensible, that, in Zeal to perform my poor Office to his Ashes, I have too much trespassed on the Patience of this Great Assembly. Yet, I was led on by some kind of confidence, that, having this the Subject of my Discourse, I should not only have your Customary Pardon, and more than ordinary Attention, but the most favourable Concurrence of your tenderest Passions. For though, on less, and private occasions, there is scarce any Sorrow but may be wearied, and dried up, by the distance of almost Thirty years :

Yet

Yet I could not but believe, and you your selves have given me the greatest reasons imaginable to believe it, that there are none here present, who came not hither still afresh, and most nearly concerned in the Irreparable Loss of that excellent King.

Perhaps some that have heard me this day, were his own Menial Servants; and so were Domestick Witnesses of His incomparable Goodness; and had a share in His particular Kindness: Many there may be here, who enjoyed the blessed fruits of His first Peaceful, most Gentle, most Religious Reign: Many I see, who grieved at His Ruine, and indeavoured too to support His falling Greatness with the hazard of all, with the loss of much, that was near, and dear to them. Even the youngest of us, methinks, cannot but still, most sensibly regret His untimely Fall; by which they were deprived of so perfect an Example of all Virtue, and Piety; and were forced to pass away their first years, that else might have been most pleasant, amidst the Oppressions, and Confusions of their Country.

And certainly, all of us together have just cause to be humbled, under a sense of Gods Wrath, and to Implore his Mercy, that this Royal Innocent Blood, which was spilt for the Church, and has cried from under the Altar, may, at length, cease Crying; not only against the Wretched Instruments of that Cruelty, for that also, in our own Charity, and by His Example, we ought to Pray for: But, that His Blood may cease
Crying

Crying against the whole Nation it self, which (How shall I express it, without offence? Nay, How with a just Resentment?) which certainly suffered it by their Negligence: Should I not add, by their Stupidity? And too much hastened it by their Sins.

And, if we were all cordially thus affected, as, I doubt not but we all are; with such Indignation for his Undeserved Death; such Veneration for His never-dying Memory; may we all endeavour to express these our Affections, not only by declaring our abhorrence of those Black Counsels, and Accursed Practices, which finished the last part of His Tragedy; but even of those that did, any way, though at never so great a distance, in the least, contribute towards it. May all of us, according to our several Stations and Abilities: And, Who can have Abilities to do this, if you here present have not? May all of us be most industriously Watchful, that the same Schismatical Designs, and Antimonarchical Principles, which then Inspired so many ill Men, mis-led some Good Men, and cost our Good King so dear; may not once more revive, and insinuate themselves again, under the same, or newer, and craftier Disguises, and find an opportunity to attempt the like Mischiefs.

For the Present, Let us all joyn in our hearty Prayers to Almighty God, That he would be pleased to pardon to us, and to our Country, this Hainous, Publick Sin,
by

by the same Infinite Compassion, by which we can only expect Forgiveness of our own particular Sins; By that Blood, which speaks better things than the Blood of the most Righteous *Abel*, or *Charles*; By that Blood, which is more Precious than the *Kings*: By the Blood, and Merits, and Intercession of *Jesus Christ* our Lord. *Amen.*

F I N I S.